In the claims:

Claims 1-27 (Cancelled)

28. (Previously Added) A stent, comprising:

a helical structure having a plurality of coils, said structure having a longitudinal axis and said coils having a pitch, said structure having an internal longitudinal passage wherein said structure is made from a filament having a cross-section and an outer surface, said filament comprising:

a soft flexible elongated member having an outer surface; and

a bioabsorbable or biodegradable polymeric outer coating on the outer surface of the member;

wherein, the polymeric coating has sufficient mechanical integrity to effectively maintain the flexible member in a helical configuration, until the coating has sufficiently been degraded or absorbed in vivo to effectively convert the helical structure back into a soft, elongated member, wherein the coating comprises a polymer selected from the group consisting of polyacrylamides, polyethylene glycols, polyethylene oxide, vinyl alcohols, poly(N-vinyl pyrrolidone)s and polymers made from monomers selected from the group consisting of lactide, glycolide, para-dioxanone, caprolactone, and trimethylene carbonate, caprolactone, blends thereof and copolymers thereof.

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29. (Previously Added) The stent of claim 28 wherein the coating comprises a melt polymer.

30. (Previously Added) The stent of claim 28 wherein the coating comprises a solution polymer.

31. (Previously Added) The stent of claim 28 wherein the filament comprises a surgical suture.

32. (Previously Added) The stent of claim 31 wherein the suture comprises a monofilament.

33. (Previously Added) The stent of claim 31, wherein the suture comprises a multifilament.

34. (Previously Added) The stent of claim 31 wherein the suture comprises a non-absorbable suture.

35. (Previously Added) The stent of claim 31 wherein the suture comprises an absorbable suture.

36. (Previously Added) The stent of claim 28 wherein the polymer of the coating has a glass transition temperature above 55°C.

37. (Previously Added) The stent of claim 28 wherein the polymer of the coating has a glass transition temperature above 120°C.

38. (Previously Added) The stent of claim 28 wherein the polymeric coating additionally comprises polyamide.

Claims 39-54 (cancelled)

~~55~~50. (Currently amended) A method of maintaining a passageway of a body lumen substantially open, comprising the steps of:

providing a stent, said stent comprising:

a helical structure having a plurality of coils, said structure having a longitudinal axis and a longitudinal passage, and said coils having a pitch, wherein said structure is made from a fiber, said fiber having a cross-section and said filament comprising:

an elongated flexible, filament member, having an external surface and a cross-section; and,

a polymeric outer coating on the surface of the member,

wherein, the polymeric coating has sufficient mechanical integrity to effectively maintain the flexible member in a helical configuration, wherein the coating comprises a polymer selected from the group consisting of polyacrylamides, polyethylene glycols, polyethylene oxide, vinyl alcohols, poly(N-vinyl pyrrolidone)s and polymers made from monomers selected from the group consisting of lactide, glycolide, para-dioxanone, caprolactone, and trimethylene carbonate, caprolactone, blends thereof and copolymers thereof; and,

implanting said stent in a body lumen and maintaining the stent in the body lumen for a sufficient period of time to effectively maintain the passageway of the lumen substantially open for a desired period of time until the exterior coating softens, thereby converting the stent structure into a soft, flexible filamentary structure.